

## ADDITIONAL VIEWS

*Ranking Member Rep. Norm Dicks*

### FY 2012 DOD APPROPRIATIONS BILL

In this bill, the Committee carried out its Constitutional responsibility to recommend the appropriations necessary to provide for the common defense, and I am pleased to say that this work was accomplished consistent with the Committee's longstanding tradition of conducting its work on a collegial and bipartisan basis.

As we look ahead at the very real budgetary pressures confronting the Nation in coming years and the near term, it seems inevitable to me that Congress must review more critically the continuing deployment of U.S. military forces in Afghanistan and attendant military activities in Pakistan. I believe we must reassess the extent of U.S. military involvement, and the objectives of U.S. foreign policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan, questioning whether U.S. national security requires a continued deployment of over 100,000 U.S. service personnel.

After a serious review of our security situation, and as we are currently confronting the fiscal reality that compels us to seek reductions throughout our budget to reduce the deficit, I have concluded that our Nation should take measures to significantly accelerate the withdrawal of U.S. forces.

It is clear that the nation has become weary and frustrated by the length and cost of the war in Afghanistan. A decade of deployments has cost our Nation dearly; we have suffered the loss of more than 1,600 military personnel, and prosecuting the war has taken hundreds of billions of dollars from our Treasury.

This frustration is reflected in waning public support; fewer than half of the American people now believe the fight in Afghanistan is worth continuing. They recognize the economic burden of

the war and they understand that a significant cause of the current debt crisis can be attributed to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. This will impact the military as pressure mounts to significantly reduce defense spending. This is already reflected in the \$9 billion reduction to the defense allocation for fiscal year 2012. In future years, as the defense budget continues on a likely path of decline, the resources may not be available to maintain the force structure, and concurrently develop and field the technologies needed to address emerging strategic threats to U.S. security. The current leadership of the Defense Department acknowledges as much, given the efficiencies initiative announced in January 2011 (as part of the fiscal year 2012 budget request) which assumes troop reductions and associated savings beginning in fiscal years 2015 and 2016.

According to the Lisbon Summit Declaration of November 2010, the withdrawal of NATO forces and process of transition to full Afghan security responsibility and leadership in some provinces and districts is likely to begin in 2011, following a joint Afghan NATO/ISAF assessment. The NATO Declaration also projects that, toward the end of 2014, Afghan forces should assume full responsibility for security across Afghanistan. However, the NATO Declaration also stipulates that this process will be "condition-based, not calendar-driven, and will not equate to withdrawal of ISAF-troops."

While the NATO Summit suggests the path toward withdrawal, events of the past several weeks in Afghanistan and Pakistan call for swifter action. Operation Enduring Freedom was initiated to destroy Al Qaeda operations in Afghanistan, and ensure that the Taliban government could not provide a safe haven for future operations. The death of Osama bin Laden at the hands of U.S. Special Forces in May 2011 clearly alters the underlying reason for the deployment of U.S. forces. More recently, reports of the death of Ilyas Kashmiri, a high level Al Qaeda operative, underscores that conditions in Afghanistan have changed. In addition to accomplishing some of the Nation's most fundamental objectives, the types of operations that led to these successes call into question the need to continue deployments at the current levels.

And while recent events have changed the context of U.S. operations, there are enduring problems with both the attitude and actions of Afghanistan and Pakistan. In both cases, there is cause to question the reliability of these partnerships.

In Afghanistan, there have always been the problems of government corruption and ineffectiveness outside of Kabul. At the highest levels of government, President Karzai's re-election in 2009 and the Parliamentary election of 2010 were both tainted by fraudulent ballots and other irregularities. Elections aside, Afghanistan's government ranks as one of the most corrupt anywhere in the world. Bribery, extortion and embezzlement are the normal state

of affairs. A case in point is the Kabul Bank crisis, which began in August 2010. By January of 2011, it was estimated that the bank's reckless practices resulted in losses of about \$900 million which threatened to collapse the emerging commercial financial system. It has also been reported that the Kabul Bank was used to enrich Afghanistan's political elite. The problem of corruption also extends to the Afghan military and police. The performance of the Afghan National Security Forces, especially the police, is troubling given reports of graft and widespread drug use.

In Pakistan, the fact that Osama Bin Laden was ultimately found in Abbottabad, where he had been hiding for years in a compound in the immediate proximity of senior Pakistani military officials, calls into question either the extent of Pakistani commitment to partnership with the U.S. or the competence of Pakistani officials. More recently, it has been reported that Pakistani officials may have tipped off insurgents about possible raids to be conducted by the Pakistani military. It has also been widely reported that Pakistan's Inter-service Intelligence (ISI) Directorate has extensive links to drug dealers and Islamic extremists and has been an active source of instability in Pakistan, Afghanistan and throughout the immediate region. The ISI helped the Taliban rise to power in the 1990's, and the Pakistani government is suspected of turning a blind eye to Taliban operating out of Quetta. Although Pakistan has received billions of dollars in U.S. military assistance, and has assigned a considerable portion of its forces to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, it has failed to demonstrate in fundamental ways a real commitment to partnership with the U.S. in pursuing threats to both of our Nations.

The confluence of circumstances and timing argues strongly, in my judgment, for a more expeditious reduction of our presence in the region. We should accomplish this objective with some degree of caution, guarding against a vacuum similar to the one that occurred at the end of the Soviet occupation in 1989.

To this end, I believe that the U.S. should pursue its goals in Afghanistan through political means. This has apparently been initiated in the form of talks reported to be taking place between Taliban representatives and U.S. officials under sponsorship of the German government. As negotiations continue, they must take into account the interests of surrounding nations such as Pakistan and others to ensure that countries neighboring Afghanistan do not fight with one another along sectarian or tribal divides within Afghanistan. Such negotiations should also be backed up by the prospect of either U.S. or international forces to ensure that Afghanistan does not revert back to conditions prior to the Taliban's defeat.

While a political solution will require a deliberate and patient approach, we should nevertheless begin work within the Congress, and with the Administration, to bring deployed forces to a level

more consistent with a realistic assessment of our national security interests and a more realistic assessment of the intentions of Afghanistan and Pakistan.